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Hunger
AUG 27 1987

August 26, 1987

The Honorable Mickey Leland, Chairman
House Select Committee on Hunger
419 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-4318

Dear Chairman Leland:

As you continue your work on the FY 1988-89 Foreign Aid Authorization legislation, HR 3100, we urge your support for the existing provisions of Title VIII of the bill, that portion relating to Africa. We are very concerned that, in an effort to reach agreement on a final authorization bill, additional compromises will be made which would weaken that title. Compromises already made -- cuts in African development assistance levels, elimination of the mandatory debt relief provisions of HR 1199, and the restrictions imposed on funding for the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) -- are of grave concern to us. Further changes, we believe, would be inappropriate and damaging. We appreciate your role in formulating HR 3100, and we urge you to support the legislation as it stands.

The case for Africa's need and for the U.S. interest in responding to that need is well established. Title VIII is a realistic, sensitive and creative approach to providing assistance to Africa which will attack root problems in a way that addresses both the larger economic issues and the immediate needs of the poor majority. It ensures that an adequate level of assistance will be available and, equally important, that the means through which that assistance is provided will be effective and sustainable. The key provisions of the legislation provide for:

--mandated participation and consultation with local groups at the grassroots level;

--integration of women, who produce most of Africa's food, more closely into the development process;

--protection of the poor in designing programs of policy reform and structural adjustment;

--maintenance and restoration of the renewable natural resource base in ways which increase agricultural production;

--specific earmarks for development assistance funding in key areas of need, particularly the critical sectoral priorities outlined in Section 472(H1)(b), 472(H2) and (H3);

--debt relief language urging the president to institute a five year debt moratorium for selected African nations;

--funding for SADCC, unencumbered by further restrictions, to promote regional development in southern Africa to address the continuing conflict and instability in that vital region;

With these essential elements, the bill as it now stands speaks substantively and directly to both U.S. interests and humanitarian concerns in Africa with realism, compassion, and a view to solutions that will endure. We urge your support of Title VIII without further amendment.

We will be happy to provide additional information on any and all of these issues based on our particular experience and the expertise of our constituencies. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

If you have any additional questions regarding this letter, please contact Corinne Whitaker, Bread for the World (202)269-0200, or John Swenson, Catholic Relief Services (202)466-4578.

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